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SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: TRANSNISTRIAN PARTICIPATION IN MOLDOVAN
ELECTIONS: CORJOVA SCENESETTER

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Accordingly.

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Ten polling stations will be opened on the right bank for residents of Transnistria, and at least several thousand Transnistrians are expected to attempt to vote on April 5. Additionally, a polling station will be opened in the village of Corjova, which is physically located on the left bank of the river but is officially under Moldovan central-government control. In 2007 Transnistrian authorities succeeded in blocking attempts to carry out Moldovan elections in Corjova. We have already seen signs of trouble this year. Ballot boxes being delivered to Corjova were impounded. Transnistrian Cossacks have threatened to use "all means necessary" to prevent voting from taking place in Corjova. The Ministry of Reintegration sent a letter to the Embassy (and other participants in the 3-plus-2), asking observers to pay special attention to elections in Corjova. Embassy plans to have two separate observer teams visit Corjova. End Summary.

Ten Polling Stations for TN Residents, plus
Corjova

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¶2. (SBU) No polling stations will be opened on the territory of controlled by Transnistrian authorities for voting in the April 5 Moldovan elections. However, on March 10, the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) ruled that ten polling stations would be opened on the right bank for residents of Transnistria (left bank) and those residing in the security zone. These ten locations are Sanatauca, Rezina, Cocieri, Dorotcaia, Varnita (2), Hagimus, Rascaieti, Copanca, and Firladeni. Some residents of Transnistria loyal to Moldova are expected to participate. They will be required to travel significant distances in order to vote. Although official GOM statistics claim that there are 223,580 eligible voters in Transnistria, the number of active voters is far more modest, having doubled from 4,298 in 2001 to 8,206 in 2005. While there is no way to estimate in advance how many Transnistrian residents will attempt to vote on Sunday, one can assume that at least several thousand will make the effort.

13. (SBU) Additionally, the Dubasari Raion Council decided to open a polling station in Corjova, a village of the right-bank Dubasari raion. Corjova is located on the left bank, but is under Moldovan central-government control. It is President Voronin's home town. It is a particularly sensitive spot, because Transnistrian authorities reject the central government's control of Corjova and consider it to be a part of the Transnistrian area of Dubasari. During the June 2007 local elections, a polling station was opened in Corjova, but Transnistrian police and security forces surrounded the village, blockaded the polling station, assaulted the building and used force to prevent voting there. Given the incidents that took place during the 2007 elections, there are concerns that Corjova may once again become a flashpoint for electoral confrontation.

Corjova Heating Up

14. (SBU) Several incidents have already taken place that suggest it will not be smooth sailing for elections in Corjova or for left-bank residents wishing to cross to the right bank to vote. On March 19, the ballot boxes being transported by Corjova Mayor Mitul to the polling station were seized by the Transnistrian "customs" office, labeled as contraband and confiscated. On March 26 the Transnistrian Cossacks issued a statement warning that they would prevent "with

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all available means" any attempts to campaign and/or conduct Moldovan parliamentary elections in Transnistria's Dubasari Raion. The Cossacks noted that they were particularly concerned about possible voting in Corjova. The Transnistrian Dubasari administration issued a decree that the school building intended for use as a polling station would be impounded and sold to pay off tax debts.

15. (SBU) The Ministry of Reintegration informed the Joint Control Commission (JCC) of the decision to open the ten polling stations on the right bank for Transnistrian residents and to open a polling station in Corjova. Given the difficulties of the 2007 elections in Corjova, the Ministry called on the military observers to monitor the situation in the Security Zone and ensure the free movement of people to the polling places. According to press reports, the Transnistrian side said that it rejected the opening of a polling station in Corjova and refused to guarantee the security of Corjova residents who took part in the elections. The Russian delegation also opposed the opening of an electoral sector in Corjova, saying that doing so could make the situation in the Security Zone tense.

16. (SBU) The human rights monitoring NGO Promo-Lex noted that the ten polling stations open for Transnistrians were the only polling stations in the Republic of Moldova which lacked voter lists. Additionally, the NGO noted that voters who lived in Transnistria did not have adequate access to information about the candidates or their electoral programs. In the rest of Moldova people could vote in their own villages, but the ten polling stations were miles from the residents' homes and most of the people did not own cars.

Comment

17. (SBU) Embassy plans to have two teams attempt to monitor the situation in Corjova and other nearby villages on elections day. This will give us a first-hand report on the events.

CHAUDHRY